

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
June 28, 2016 Meeting**

13. **CAR No. 16-105** (S. Pomajambo)

**1331 East Canal Street
Shockoe Slip Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Install a mural on an existing
concrete retaining wall.**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to install a mural on an existing concrete retaining wall below a bridge in the Shockoe Slip Old and Historic District. The applicant proposes to paint the mural on the concrete wall.

Staff has reviewed the project based on the Mural Guidelines found on page 71 of the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* and outlined below.

1. *In general, murals should be painted on removable material, not directly on a building wall. Murals should be installed on framing that allows water to weep between the mural and the wall. Attachments should not irrevocably damage the building. Painting directly onto the walls of a non-contributing building will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis. Adding a mural to a previously-painted, non-primary elevation of a contributing building will be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

The applicant is proposing to paint directly onto the concrete retaining wall. Staff believes the existing wall is non-contributing to the district as it appears to be constructed out of modern concrete block and serves a practical purpose of supporting the adjacent hillside. For this reason, staff supports painting on this non-contributing element of the Old and Historic District.

2. *Murals painted on primary facades are not permitted.*

The proposed mural will not be painted on a primary façade as it will be painted on a utilitarian retaining wall.

3. *A mural's appearance, colors, and scale should reflect the history of the district of which the building is a part. The use of dayglow, luminescent, or reflective paint or materials is discouraged.*

The proposed mural's large scale is consistent with the ghosting of the painted wall signs in this commercial area. The applicant is proposing to employ Pat Perry as the artist for the mural. Mr. Perry proposes to paint a nature scene similar to the example provide in the application. Staff recommends the approval of the mural be conditioned on the mural not including dayglow, luminescent or reflective paint or materials..

4. *A mural should not obscure or distort the historic features of a building.*

The mural will be installed on a relatively blank wall with only one metal element that appears to not have architectural significance, and therefore the mural will not obscure any historic features.

5. *Murals should be in compliance with the general signage requirements for Old and Historic Districts, where applicable.*

As the proposed mural is not lit and does not obstruct important architectural features; staff finds the proposed mural is in compliance with the applicable general signage standards in the *Guidelines*.

6. *The installation of a mural within a City Old and Historic District shall meet the definition of a substantial impact.*

Property owners within 150' of this proposed mural were notified of this application as the project met the definition of substantial impact.

7. *Applicants must provide written approval from the building's property owner.*

The applicant has not provided this approval letter though has stated he has received a verbal approval from the property owner. Staff recommends the applicant provide written approval from the building's property owner prior to commencement of painting.

8. *Applicants are strongly encouraged to present designs unique to Richmond, not previously installed elsewhere.*

The applicant has stated that that artist will not be painting anything that has been painted at other locations.

9. *Murals are allowed on commercial buildings, as defined by current zoning.*

The subject property is zoned B-5 which is a commercial zone and is in a commercial neighborhood.

Staff recommends approval of the project as the project meets the Commission's Mural Guidelines with the acceptance of the following conditions:

- The mural not including dayglow, luminescent or reflective paint or materials.
- The applicant provide written approval from the building's property owner prior to commencement of painting.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the noted conditions, is consistent with the Standards for Signage in Section 30-930.7(f) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.